

O'Brien Block -- 119 W. First St.
Oswego
Oswego County
New York

HABS No. NY-244 C

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

O'BRIEN BLOCK 119 WEST FIRST STREET

Location: 119 West First Street - East side of First Street between Seneca and Cayuga, Oswego New York.

Present Owner: Neal O'Brien Lumber Company

Present Occupant: The building is currently vacant

Present Use: After the Neal O'Brien Lumber Company moved to its new quarters in 1970, the building has been rented, primarily for storage - most recently, for a short period to the local Agway store.

Statement of Significance: This building, part of the block between Cayuga and Seneca, was in the heart of the pre-Civil War business district in Oswego. The buildings in this block comprise the last of the pre-Civil War commercial buildings in Oswego (with the exception of the Stone and Willett store which is on the National Register of Historic Places).

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1847. John B. Leverich purchased the property from Mary H. Grant. In 1843 the assessed valuation decreased over the next several years until 1847 when there was a marked jump from \$800.00 to \$2,000, indicating new construction on the property between 1846 and 1847. This would seem logical since evidence indicates that both 117 and 121 West First were built at this time.
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners:

This building is located on part of lot 8, block 17 on a parcel of land 25' from the northwest corner of the lot, extending 25' along West First Street by 50 feet deep. The following references to the title of this property are found in the Oswego County New York deed books:

1843 Warranty deed, 4/10/43, recorded in Book 28 of Deeds, page 85, 5/10/1843 conveys property from

Page -2-

O'BRIEN BLOCK 119 WEST FIRST STREET

Mary Huganin Grant, consideration \$1,250.00.

- 1868 Quit Claim Deed dated 4/16/1868 recorded in Book 123 of Deeds, page 84 conveys property to John B. Leverich, Jr., Cornelia G. Doolittle and Maria Burnham in equal thirds, consideration \$2,000.
- 1870 Last will of Cornelia Doolittle 5/15/1871, Book 132 of Deeds, page 422 leaves her third in equal thirds to children, Amelia Doolittle (Griggs, 1873), Charles Doolittle, Jr. and Harriet Doolittle (Griggs, 1876).
- 1875 Quit-Claim Deed, recorded 4/8/1875 in Book 146 of Deeds, page 488 John Leverich, Jr. conveys his third property to Charles Doolittle, Jr.
- 1889 Deed recorded 8/14/1889, Book 202 of Deeds, page 118, Amelia Doolittle Griggs conveys her share to her uncle, David Burnham.
- 1892 Deed recorded 1/25/1892 in Book 208 of Deeds, page 509, Charles Doolittle (now in Chicago) conveys his share of the property to David Burnham, probably along with the property he received from John Leverich, Jr. We can speculate that Harriet's third reverted to her sister, Amelia on her death in 1876 and hence to Burnham.
- 1909 Warranty Deed recorded 8/23/1909 in Book 267 of Deeds, page 35, Burnham conveys all of property to the Oswego Tool Company, consideration \$2,000. The rear half of the property did not have a building on it.
- 1926 Warranty Deed dated and recorded 4/23/1926 in Book 343 of Deeds, page 436, conveys property to William G. O'Brien.
- 1927 Covenant vs. Grantor Deed dated 8/25/1927 conveys property to Neal O'Brien Lumber Company.

B. Historical events and persons connected with the structure:

John B. Leverich was a prominent businessman in Oswego during the 1840's and '50's . He owned a boot and shoe shop on the West side of West First Street and then built a second shop on the East side (119) which he apparently rented (his will refers to this as rental property). He was a First Lieutenant in the Oswego Guards in the early 1840's served as a fire

Page -3-

O'BRIEN BLOCK 119 WEST FIRST STREET

warden in 1845 and was First Ward Supervisor in 1857. His home on the corner of West Fourth and Cayuga still stands and is an integral part of the proposed West Park-Franklin Square Historic District.

Following the general pattern of the rest of the block after the prime business area moved further south on First Street, this building was used to manufacture and sell clothing (Waxelbaum and Company - 1864-67), then was converted to the Globe Hotel in 1868.

Just after the turn of the century, it, along with other property in the block was purchased by the Oswego Tool Company, manufacturer's of tools and machines. In 1927 it was purchased to house the Neal O'Brien Lumber Company.

C. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

1. Bibliography:

Churchill, John C., LL. D. Landmarks of Oswego County D. Mason & Company, Publishers 1895

Finn, Leo Old Shipping Days in Oswego

Oswego County Board of Supervisors 1972

City Directories

Tax Assessment Records

County Deed and Mortgage Records

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